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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO: BANGKOK, CANBERRA, LONDON, MOSCOW, NEW DELHI,
PARIS, SAIGON, VIENTIANE, USUN, CINGPAC/POLAD

FROM : Amembassy PHNOM PENH

DATE: May 11, 1965

SUBJECT: De la Manière de Négocier avec les Cambodgiens

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REF :

REVIEWED BY *Ruhley* DATE 10/9/80
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

The Cambodian Embassy in Washington closed over a year ago, the American Embassy in Phnom Penh is closing down now, and direct government-to-government contacts between the two nations will presumably be confined to the United Nations and capitals of third countries where both the United States and Cambodia are represented diplomatically. There remains a possibility that, either in the near future or ultimately, a so-called Geneva conference may be held. With this possibility in mind, plus the assumption that the break in Cambodian/American relations will not last forever, a few notes on Cambodian negotiating techniques may be of interest.

Mention needs first be made of the style in which Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Chief of State, governs this country. Sihanouk's prominence and predominance in Cambodia, and in Cambodian foreign policy, are not questioned by anyone, whatever the private opinion of republican or modern-minded Cambodians might be; he determines all important policies and makes all important and many minor decisions. Whatever may have been his habits in the past, however, the Prince himself does not now negotiate with foreign ambassadors (with the possible exception of the Communist Chinese); his style is the monologue. Prince Sihanouk is also instrumental in explaining to the nation the policies he has devised--a task which is only rarely undertaken by the Prime Minister or other officials. It is Sihanouk's boast that Cambodia is a house of glass, without secrets or subterfuges. He claims its policy

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Contents and Classification Approved by:

References:

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is crystal clear, its objectives simple, and its principles immutable. Accepting for the moment that this claim is substantially true, there certainly are tactical changes, some of them so radical as to lead to the various charges of flightiness and unpredictability frequently flung at the Prince.

What, then, is the function of Cambodia's ambassadors? It should be noted that; on the whole, they are held in very low regard by the Prince, and he has occasionally expressed, publicly and by name, his low opinion of them. They seldom make recommendations to Phnom Penh and, when they do, there is no indication that these recommendations are taken seriously. For example, during the November-December 1963 diplomatic crisis with the United States, the Cambodian Ambassador in Washington, Nong Kimny, apparently restricted himself to straight forward, and rather infrequent, reporting. There is a considerable amount of competition for ambassadorial posts and, in fact, for postings abroad in general, but once abroad the function of Cambodian Ambassadors appears to be limited. One responsibility is to screen the local press for articles or comments about Cambodia, to report these to Phnom Penh and to send a "clarification" if the report is deemed inadequate or the remarks in any way slighting. Secondly, on festive or other occasions the Cambodian Embassy abroad drafts a telegram in its own name and that of the Khmer colony in the country felicitating the Prince on his latest triumph or pledging undying support to some (ephemeral) cause. The Cambodian Embassies in Peiping, Moscow, Prague and Paris also have duties in loco parentis with respect to Prince Sihanouk's sons, at least one of whom is in each of the countries involved.

This kind of diplomacy is, of course, of very limited real importance. There are, however, several Cambodian diplomatists whose abilities must be taken seriously.

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It is the characteristics common to all these men which, the Embassy suggests, are worth some careful thought, particularly before negotiations are again undertaken with the Cambodians. The first of these qualities is absolute loyalty to the Prince. For example, none of these gentlemen has ever, even in private and intimate conversation, admitted to an American that any policy

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which the Prince has espoused is in any way unsound. It is doubtful that anybody knows what these men really believe. They may not even know themselves. But this absolute loyalty is a fundamental characteristic.

Secondly, their negotiating instructions are simple and inflexible. A Cambodian diplomat is given a position which he then presents accompanied by a suitable quantity of verbiage, but there is no negotiating in the usually accepted sense of the word. The Cambodian approach is "take it or leave it". This was successful at Geneva in 1954 but has been somewhat less successful in such exercises as the United Nations Security Council Mission to Cambodia and Viet-Nam in June and July of 1964 and the New Delhi talks with the United States in December of that year. A man like [redacted], willing, on occasion, to change the order of the points in a Cambodian program or to adjust dates if these are not significant. Fundamentally, however, it is not a question of minimum and maximum objectives but rather of a position which will be stated at the beginning of the negotiations and, if necessary, some months later at the end in substantially the same terms. If the Cambodian terms are not accepted then the negotiations are broken off. So far this technique has been reasonably successful from a Cambodian point of view, although the country's relations with all its neighbors are poor. (This reflects the Prince's policy, not that of his diplomats.) Thirdly, the Cambodian negotiators are thoroughly familiar with their subject matter. This has occasionally made dealing with the United States rather difficult; on the one hand the Cambodians demand that the opposing negotiator be of comparable rank to their own (and for the New Delhi talks they made Son Sann a Minister of State, a higher rank than that of the Foreign Minister); on the other hand, their own knowledge of Cambodian/U. S. relations, and the elaborate mythology the Cambodians have built up in connection therewith, is so intimate, detailed, and voluminous that only someone like a desk officer who has worked full-time for an extended period on Cambodian problems can reasonably be expected to cope with their argumentation. Finally, there is the question of personal relationships. Cambodians, from the Prince on down, lay great stress upon the proper fulfillment of all protocolary and ceremonial obligations. In some considerable measure the present low state of Cambodian/U. S. relations is a consequence of our failure to treat the Prince during several visits to the United States in the fashion to which he thought he was entitled. The Prince's own hospitality is lavish and he takes the greatest of pains to make sure that guests are made to feel comfortable and welcome. The pertinence of this to Cambodian negotiating is that the forms must be fully observed. What is to be avoided, of course, is the assumption that these manifestations of esteem mean that the Cambodians are willing to do business. They are, but only on Cambodia's own terms.

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One final point: publicity. The Cambodian negotiators are careful to make their points for the record, and this record is published promptly in Phnom Penh (the "house of glass" principle referred to earlier). The Cambodian account may be tendentious and is likely to do less than justice to the opposition's position, but it is published fast and is the only account likely to be available here. If the occasion is important, this slanted account then becomes another chapter in the mythology of Cambodia's difficulties with the outside world, which, of course, are never Cambodia's fault.

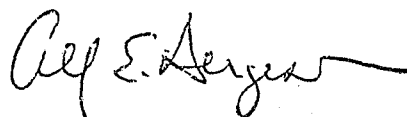
To sum up, the Embassy suggests that [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the Prince has diplomatists who, like Vyshinsky in his prime, will stick to their instructions to the bitter end, including spoiling the best laid plans of greater powers. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The significant difference between Son Sann, for example, and Vyshinsky is that the former will seek to avoid personal antagonisms, but he is no less stubborn. The uses to which these diplomatists are put are entirely up to the Prince. Cambodia's foreign policy is manifested primarily through the Prince's speeches and the diplomats, even the Foreign Minister, have next to nothing to say about its content. Thus, Cambodian negotiating is not a continuous process but rather a set-piece affair. Within their self-imposed limits the best of the Cambodian representatives are wily, well-briefed, implacable, and, in brief, formidable. Like their master the Prince, their accomplishments are not insignificant, recognizing that they all are leading from weakness and speaking for a country which is geopolitically weak and likely to remain so.



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